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POSSIBLE PATTERNS OF GERMAN COLLAPSE

1. Introduction: The Pattern of 1918

It will be useful to preface this analysis of present prospects facing Germany with a brief survey of the pattern of collapse in 1918.

The breakdown of resistance in 1918 was in the first instance a military phenomenon, though its course and outcome were determined by the social, economic, and political structure of the German nation as a whole. The high command recognized as early as August 13 that the war was definitely lost. The defection of Germany's allies, which began in September, merely hastened the process of defeat. In October, after a few inept and futile peace feelers, the high command was forced to ask for armistice terms.

The decline in Germany's military position from August to November was accompanied by a shift in the locale of political power. Since 1916, when Hindenburg and Ludendorff took over the high command, political power had rested in a military dictatorship which was allied to the interests of big business. So long as there seemed to be a reasonable prospect of military success the opposition to this arrangement was largely passive. War weariness and longing for peace were growing among the masses, but their political representatives, the Social Democrats, the Centrum and the Progressives, were unable or unwilling to make a serious bid for power until the political prestige of the high command was fatally compromised by the imminent prospect of defeat. Even then it is more accurate to say that political power was abandoned by the military dictatorship than that it was seized by parties in the Reichstag. The decisive step was the appointment of the ministry of Prince Max early in October; Germany for the first time had a genuine parliamentary regime. The real shift in the locale of political power thus came about quietly, while hostilities were still in progress, and well in advance of the so-called revolution.

It is important to understand the conditions which gave rise to this special pattern of development. The military dictatorship in 1916 had little in common with the present-day totalitarian dictatorship. It was imposed upon the political structure of the pre-war Reich and had to work through established agencies and channels. It operated exclusively at the top and never succeeded in gaining thorough control over the organizations and lives of the German people.

Why did power fall into the hands of a democratic parliamentary coalition? The reason is twofold: both the prevailing temper of the German people and the existing organizational structure of political life favored this outcome. On the one hand, the German people were sick of the war with its appalling bloodshed and undernourishment; and they were for the most part under the influence of a democratic ideology. On the other hand, there

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were in existence well-organized democratic parties which were in a position to represent the wishes of the people for peace and constitutional reform. No other serious contenders for power existed. The conservatives were compromised by their reactionary policies and the revolutionary parties were sectarian.

The situation in the summer of 1918 can be summarized in the following way. The German people had had their fill of war and autocracy; they had never tried democracy, and believed in its possibilities. When defeat became certain, the high command lost power which shifted almost automatically to the non-revolutionary democratic parties.

2. Possible Patterns of Collapse in 1944

I. The Difference between 1918 and today

In its military and economic aspects the present position of Germany offers both parallels and contrasts to that of 1918. But on the political side there is hardly anything in common between now and then.

Military defeat for Germany seems just as certain now as it must have in the summer of 1918. But her enemies are still a long way from the homeland at present; there is more defensive space in which to manouver now than there was in 1918. This relative advantage is partly offset by the vastly greater importance of air war today, which reaches into the heart of the Reich. The people are better fed than they were in 1918, but again air raids are an offsetting factor. War weariness must be felt on a scale at least comparable to 1918. Thus in 1945 a war-weary German people is faced with defeat, perhaps less immediately but no less certainly than in 1918.

Politically, however, the situation today is utterly different from 1918. The Nazi dictatorship is entirely different from the military dictatorship of the last war: unlike the latt er it is a totalitarian dictatorship used in the sense that society has been completely pulverized into its individual atoms which are then organized and manipulated from the top down, not from the bottom up. No voluntary organizations--except the churches--are left above ground; any attempt to form them or to express discontent is met with ruthless terror.

It is, of course, true that there has been close agreement as to aims between the Nazis and Germany's traditional ruling groups, and the former have increasingly penetrated into the latter, so that many big industrialists and some generals today were upstart Nazi politicians a few years ago. But the process of integrating the Nazis into the ruling class is a long way from complete; the group still has a separate and recognizable identity. As long as the regime was enjoying successes this separateness was not particularly

important, and it even had its advantages. The Nazi movement provided a social escalator for the recruitment of talent from the lower middle class; in the event of complete merger with the ruling groups the old hardening of class lines would set in again. But in times of adversity, the distinctive position occupied by the Nazi governing clique has a special importance which it is essential to understand. In the eyes of people all over the world, both inside and outside Germany, the Nazi leadership, including those industrialists, bankers, civil servants and generals who have openly sided with it, bear the responsibility for the war and all that it has brought with it. As long as things were going well for Germany, this meant disapproval from outside and approval from within. But now that things are going badly and Germany is faced with the prospect of defeat, the Nazi group is becoming the object of nearly universal popular detestation. They are the one group which can have no hope of salvaging anything from the approaching debacle. And this means, as a matter of course, that whatever their services to Germany's ruling class may have been in the past they are rapidly becoming a liability and a menace at the present time.

If the Nazis nevertheless remain in power the reasons are easy to understand. So long as the system of totalitarian control over every aspect of German life remains intact, there is no possibility for a popular opposition to crystallize. And the army leaders, who are the only ones having disposition of sufficiently powerful force to challenge the Nazi position, would run the risk of annihilation if they should attempt an ouster move. The Nazis have, especially in the Gestapo and the SS , forces with which to fight back. If an open conflict should develop, the door would be open to revolt from within and invasion from without. Clearly the army leaders and the industrialists, with whom they would undoubtedly be allied, must act with extreme caution in any plan to kick the Nazis out, and it may even be that they will be permanently paralysed by the dilemma facing them.

In 1918 the absence of totalitarian controls and the presence of political parties made the transfer of political power relatively simple and bloodless. No such conditions exist today.

In addition to the organizational aspect of the problem, there are other differences between the popular opposition of 1918 and the potential popular opposition of today. Then, workers, liberals, and Catholics were under the influence of democratic ideology; it seems unlikely that this will be so a second time. The Weimar Republic was in itself a bitter experience for many of the masses. The working class and what remains of the lower middle class is likely to emerge from this war in a "never-again" frame of mind. It is, of course, possible that the German people will be too exhausted and battered to play an active role for some time after the close of hostilities, but when their influence is felt again it will probably be much more revolutionary than the democratic opposition of 1918.

Further political differences between 1918 and 1943, in the sense of differences in outlook and motivation among various classes of the population, are traceable to the different character of the opposition coalitions then

and now. In 1918 it was France, England, and the United States, countries with essentially similar social structures, which were all fighting for the same straightforward goal: to stop Germany's drive for greatly increased world political and economic power, and to weaken Germany so that she would not soon be in a position to try again. Today it is England, the United States, and Soviet Russia. England and the United States, again similarly constituted and similarly motivated, are working with socialist Russia for a common immediate military aim. But Russia may have more far-reaching goals than checking Germany's renewed drive for world conquest: she may be looking forward to the social and economic reconstruction of Germany. Alongside an immediate community of interest, there may thus be a long-run diversity of interest between the two major parts of the anti-German coalition. This fact naturally has powerful repercussions inside Germany. The same factors were present in Germany after the Russian revolution in 1917-18, but because of the greater attractive power of democratic ideology and the weakness of the young Soviet republic they were not yet of decisive importance.

So far as the Nazis are concerned there is not much difference between Germany's eastern and western enemies, a fact which finds formal expression in the Anglo-Russian alliance binding the two parties not to enter into negotiations with the "Hitlerite government."

For army leaders and industrialists, however, the situation is different. They would certainly like to be on the winning side against Britain and the United States, but they are not sentimentalists and will hardly be inclined to fight to the death in a losing cause. As between the western powers and Russia from the economic and social angle, they must necessarily prefer the former, and since victory is out of the question, they may work for the defeat which is least dangerous to their own material interests, a defeat which will permit the preservation of private capitalism. The army leaders and industrialists may therefore try to ensure the dominance of Anglo-American over Russian influence in the reconstruction of Europe. This may give them a chance to play the role of junior partner to British and American businessmen in the rehabilitation of world economy. This objective does not exclude the possibility that these interests can try to cooperate politically with the U.S.S.R. in order to improve their bargaining position.

For the potential popular opposition in Germany, the character of the enemy coalition is also likely to have a profound significance. If the United States and Britain continue to show themselves hostile to or fearful of popular forces, it is possible that, despite undoubted anti-Russian feelings in the middle and lower classes, a German popular movement may be strongly pro-Russian in its orientation. The reason is very simple: that the Russians have nothing to fear and everything to gain from the fullest possible development of a radical popular movement.

To sum up: today the political situation in Germany is radically different from 1918. A smooth transfer of political power from a totalitarian dictatorship to an organized political opposition is out of the

question because the very essence of totalitarian dictatorship is the absence of organized opposition. And as long as the totalitarian controls remain intact the army must hesitate to intervene for fear of precipitating a crisis which would involve the disruption of both home and fighting fronts. It is in this setting that we must attempt to trace the possible courses of German collapse.

II. Pattern of Collapse

a. Against this background, the following possibilities of collapse may be envisaged.

If the United Nations remain united — that is, if Germany's political warfare aimed at splitting them and at concluding a negotiated peace with either Russia or the Western Powers is unsuccessful, the following alternative courses will remain open.

1. The Nazi leadership may determine to retain control to the very end. There are certain indications that the Nazis are preparing for this eventuality. The concentration of all power over the domestic fields in the hands of Himmler and Speer, the reactivation of the SA indicate the resolution of the Nazi leadership not to allow the emergence of a non-Nazi government. By doing this, the Nazis will become fully isolated and lose completely any hold over the masses and traditional ruling groups. Their power could be maintained only by more terror. Wholesale executions of potential oppositionists must then be expected. It is also likely that the Nazi leadership will then resort on a large scale to the scorched earth policy in occupied Europe. Each withdrawal will be accompanied by wholesale destruction.

The defeat will then leave an utterly exhausted European continent. Industries, if not already blasted by air attacks, will be destroyed by the SS. The transportation system will be disrupted. The administrative machinery will have collapsed. Farmers will hoard, workers will refuse to work.

There will then certainly occur a series of social upheavals. But these upheavals are likely to have the character of social convulsions. No group may have the strength to organize Germany politically and socially prior to the entry of foreign troops.

Military Government in such a situation will be faced with stupendous tasks. It will have to run state and society. It will have to organize the country from scratch. It may only find assistance at the municipal level. Exhaustion and destruction will then have transformed the German people into mere objects of rule.

Military Government in such a situation will have to protect Germany from the wrath of her neighbors. The more intense the terrorization of occupied Europe becomes the deeper will be the hatred of everything German. Military Government will have to prevent unorganized vengeance.

2. The Nazi leadership, realizing that the game is lost, may resort to a shadow government. Hitler may be pushed into the presidency of Germany and a government composed of generals, industrialists, high civil servants, may be put into power by the Nazis. Such a government migh accept unconditional surrender, and dissolve the Nazi Party with the understanding that the essentials of the Nazi system be preserved. Given these conditions, the SS will go underground and establish a cadre SS organization, penetrating any political movement that may emerge. Especially, it may try to penetrate left wing groups.

Under these conditions, political movements will arise in opposition to the outwardly conservative government. These movements are likely to have revolutionary aims. The revolution may start with a simple strike in one big fadory. The government may be unable to cope with this situation. The strike may spread. The oppressive machinary may not be adequate to cope with it. Though the revolutionary movement may be restricted to relatively small groups, it may assume major proportions. It may aim at a social revolution.

Always assuming that the United Nations are still united, this movement could be directed toward a democratic socialism by the joint efforts of the United Nations. It is the timing of military government which will then be important. Every major social transition is bloody in its beginnings. If Germany is occupied furing the initial stage of this revolution, the occupying army may be compelled to oppose the revolution and to side with the shadow government, in order to restore law and order - whether this shadow government is recognized by them or not. This will create hostility to the United Nations, and, if Russia should cooperate, will wipe out Russia's esteem. It will strengthen Nationalism, and National Socialism, and will reinforce the clandestine Nazi movement.

If, to use Mr. Churchill's words, Germany is "left to stew in her own juice" prior to military occupation, thereby tolerating the growth of a revolutionary movement, a possibility, may even a likelihood, exists that the period of violence will be short and a national and democratic government may be established. This government will, of course, be weak, and its powers will be challenged by internal opposition and hostility from occupied Europe.

3. A conservative anti-Nazi government composed of generals, industrialists and high civil servants may be established in opposition to the Nazis, possibly by a coup d'etat. Such a coup d'etat will lead to the

arrest of Hitler and other Nazi leaders; it may rescind the anti-Jewish legislation; restore the freedom of the churches and invite persons like Dr. Kuss, the last parliamentary leader of the Catholic Centre Party, and Niemoeller to enter the government.

In this way, the political opposition in Germany would be split. Large masses of the people who are merely war-weary will be satisfied with any kind of government that ends the war and restores some kind of dignity. The stability of such government will, however, depend entirely upon the attitude of the United Nations.

For there is no question that revolutionary movements will arise again, even though they may lack mass support from peasants, middle class , and even that of sections of the workers. The conservative government will certainly be unable to cope even with this revolutionary trend. The controls, primarily of a Nazi character, will have them broken down and fanatic Nazis and the SS in especial may join the revolutionary forces.

Military occupation in such a situation will face the most difficult problem: to side with the conservative government; to side with the revolutionary forces; not to recognize either. Non-recognition of the revolutionary force implies, however, fighting against them.

b. <u>If the United Nations are split, the following possible courses of collapse may be envisaged</u>.

The split in the United Nations cannot be utilized by the Nazis themselves. Russia and the Western Powers are committed not to deal with a Nazi government. If the Nazis want to profit from disunity they must ostensibly disappear. The Nazis may determine to stay (see a-1), but this may be considered unlikely, because of the determined opposition of the traditional ruling group.

1. A Camouflaged Nazi government may be instituted by the Nazis. The composition of this government will depend on whether it is to deal with Russia or with the Western Powers. If it is to deal with Russia, representatives of the "Eastern orientation" of German society will be put into power, that is, generals of the Seeckt school, diplomats of the Brockdorff-Rantzau shcool, high civil servants, and some industrialists. If Russia were to conclude an armistice with these groups, such a government may appeal to national-bolshevist trends within the Communist Party and the Nazi Party and thus try to get mass support. In this case the German Communist Party will play the role that is dictated to it by Russia. If such a separate peace with Russia should be concluded, democratic and socialist forces in Germany will receive a blow from which they are not likely to recover.

It has been suggested that a separate peace with Germany might be concluded if Germany's defensive powers relative to Russia's military

strength should turn out to be so great as to threaten the Russians with complete internal economic exhaustion. Having the prospect of a separate peace with Russia before them, army leaders would find their hand greatly strengthened, and they might succeed in removing the Nazis and stabilizing their rule. If they then turned all of Germany's strength against the western powers, the character of the war would be entirely changed, and it is not profitable to attempt to predict its course or outcome at the present time.

On the whole, however, this appears to be a rather remote possibility. Given growing pressure on Germany from the west and south, there is little reason to suppose that Russia's staying power is less than Germany's. Russia would probably not have much to gain from a separate peace since, with Germany on the defensive, the tempo of activity on the eastern front is already almost entirely in the control of the Russians. If they want a pause they can have it without a separate peace, and in any case they could not demobilize while the war is still going on. Finally, they have much to lose from a separate peace: it would create the only situation in which it would be politically feasible for Germany to bargain with Britain and the United States as well as with the USSR. In view of the small possible gains and the great risks which would be involved, it seems very unlikely that the Russians will be tempted to negotiate with an undefeated and conservative German regime. Nevertheless the possibility cannot be ruled out a priori.

2. The Nazi shadow government may then be set up to deal with the Western Powers. It will be composed of generals from the school of General Max Hoffmann, of diplomats from the Stresemann school, andof bankers and industrialists with international connections (of the schacht and I. G. Farben type). Such government will be popular among the traditional ruling groups but will lack mass support. It will set about arranging the most favorable form of capitulation which would undoubtedly mean maneuvering to insure dominance of Anglo-American as against Russian influence in the armistice and peace settlements. During this phase the outbreak of popular discontent and revolutionary movements should be expected.

It is unlikely that such government will find support among the Western Powers bec ause of the risks involved. It would be directly opposed to Russia which would not only threaten intervention but would activate communist-revolutionary propaganda to such a degree that the whole European continent may be shaken in its foundations.

A Nazi Shadow Government with the two possibilities of dealing either with Russia or with the Western Powers may be excluded from consideration.

3. A coup d'etat may, however, be staged by the traditional ruling classes if the probability of a separate peace with either Russia or the

Western Powers appears likely.

A genuine conservative government to deal with Anglo-America will have considerable popular support in its initial phase. It will retain this support as long as the material conditions of Germany have not deteriorated. If this happens (and it is likely to happen) the strong undercurrent of hatred of Anglo-American imperialism will merge with the anti-capitalist sentiments, and the support which the opposition will undoubtedly receive from Russia will merge into a powerful revolutionary movement with a strong national-bolshevist flavor. Military government will, under these circumstances, be extremely precarious.

4. A genuine conservative government to deal with Russia will have powerful support from the officer corps, considerable support from parts of German industry and strong popular support. This popular support will be readily forthcoming because the fear of Russia will be relieved and the left wing labor groups will realize that while Russia's support of such government will be merely an expedient of a temporary nature, a conservative pro-Anglo-American government will be there to stay because of Anglo-American support.

c. The Possibilities of a Revolution

There is, of course, always present the possibility of a revolution in Germany regardless of the unity or disunity of the United Nations.

1918 has taught us, however, that a revolution directed against a system of control not broadly based socially and in which the autonomous political and social organizations were still intact must be hopeless until the control system itself was already in a state of decomposition. The Bolshevik revolution had demonstrated that it is only possible to overthrow a government that does not exercise efficiently the means of coercion and social control.

The situation in Germany is, however, much more unfavorable to a revolution than was the case in 1918. The Nazis have learned from 1918. The nearer military defeat comes, the stronger the controls become. Moreover, the traditional ruling classes are much more afraid of a revolution in 1944 than they were in 1918. They could--and did, then--successfully rely on the trade unions to prevent the transformation of a political and constitutional upheaval into a social revolution. Without the trade unions and the Social Democratic party, 1918 might have given birth to a socialist revolution.

This bulwark no longer exists. A revolution today will certainly take a much more radical turn than it did in 1918. The traditional ruling class will, for this reason, stick to the Nazi Party in its attempt to ward off a revolution, pinning their hopes on a coup d'etat and on support from all or some of the United Nations.

The objective conditions thus do not favor a revolution. The subjective aspects, however, show an extremely ambivalent character. The atomization of German society has confined articulate opposition to small sectarian groups, probably localized and thus without national cohesion and organization. On the other hand, the mood of the essential part of the workers and of many intellectuals, farmers and middle class men is certainly much more radical than ever before in German history.

Can one expect the small revolutionary groups in Germany to assume political leadership of the discontent masses prior to Germany's military defeat or the removal of the Nazi Party rule under the above-mentioned conditions? The answer is no. Strong as the longing of the masses and the determination of the underground groups may be, the controls are too tight. The revolutionary groups can play an active role only if a non-Nazi government (indigenous militia ry dictatorship, etc.) exists.

To sum up:

a. If the United Nations are united:

1. The Nazis determine to stay to the very end.

Consequences: Utter internal collapse.
Scorched earth policy by the Nazis.
External threats.
Social convulsions.
No indigenous political movement powerful enough.

A real possibility.

2. A Nazi shadow government.

Consequence: The SS goes underground.
Revolutionary movements toward democratic socialism.
The importance of timing of military occupation.

A real possibility.

3. A conservative coup d'etat.

Consequence: Greater stability.
Revolutionary movements with smaller mass basis.

A possibility.

b. The United Nations are split:

1. The Nazis determine to stay.

Consequence: see a - 1.

Little possibility.

2. A Nazi shadow government to deal with Russia.

Consequence: Considerable support from sectors of the traditional ruling classes and masses.

Unlikely to be accepted by Russia.

3. A Nazi shadow government to deal with the Western Powers.

   Consequence: Support from the traditional ruling classes.
   Partial initial mass support.
   Later; intensified revolutionary movement.

4. Unlikely to be accepted
   A coup d'etat conservative government to deal with the Western Powers.

   Consequence: Considerable initial popular support.
   Growth of revolutionary movement with deterioration of social and economic conditions.

   Real possibility.

5. A coup d'etat conservative government to deal with Russia.

   Consequence: Considerable popular support; transition into Socialist government with Russia's support.

   Real possibility.

c. The Possibility of a Revolution apart from the alternatives under a and b.

No real possibility.